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Galloway Memorial Methodist Church

305 NORTH CONGRESS STREET

P. O. BOX 1092

Jackson, Mississippi 39205

MINISTERS

W. J. CUNNINGHAM
JOHN E. SUTPHIN

May 14, 1966

Dr. Wallace Fridy,
St. John's Methodist Church,
Anderson,
South Carolina

Dear Wallace:

It is always good to see you and Martha, even if for Lorinne and me the circumstances could not have been the happiest. Our friendship will endure anything, to be sure.

We were talking about membership when our conversation had to be terminated. A part of the answer to the question you raised about that should include these facts: we lost about 400 members, including some of our ablest and most-well-to-do, who left us to form a new denomination they call the Independent Methodist Church. The Independents constantly solicit our members to leave Galloway and join their group, and some we lose to them all along. Others, about 100, have left to join the First Baptist and First Presbyterian Churches which are expecting to remain segregated. Both are under attack now by mixed groups of whites and Negroes who hope to get those churches open.

Between you and me (and between no one else) some things really should be well understood prior to your coming here. One has to do with salary. It should be definitely fixed and agreed to by all. Some of our men, not many, but some, raised objections to the salary I was receiving, although it was the salary promised. Their objection was that the salary had been raised to its present figure for Dr. Selah and was not intended for any one else. One of our main men suggested that I asked the Official Board to lower the salary. I didn't want any of the men unhappy about the salary I was receiving, of course, so I did actually write to the officials and ask that the salary be reviewed. I didn't want what some of our leading men didn't want me to have. There was some little trouble at that point when Dr. Chappell was here years ago, and he announced in the pulpit that he was not accepting the raise in salary since there was not unanimous agreement about the raise. Clear understanding at this point just might possibly save some little misunderstanding later.

Another point is this: you should be given absolute freedom to choose your own associate. Our officials, in several instances, have gotten very much in the way here, too, by exercising their choices. They want some one they like, some one, as they expressed it, "they can talk to." I think I told you the Official Board has run the church for years with the preacher expected to be a kind of hired man. This year the Chairman attempted to manage things through the associate. Things were so tense and difficult in the race conflict, and with members leaving, that I didn't exert a lot of effort to correct that situation. In fact, I didn't notice it at first until a couple of lay men, including the Vice-chairman of the Board, pointed it out to me. So it should be understood that you and you alone choose the associate minister and that he is responsible to you alone.

Another point is this: a clear understanding about the responsibilities of the pastor in relation to those of the Chairman of the Official Board. The latter does not hesitate to make decisions that should be the pastor's. The last instance of this was the installation of the church officers last Monday night at the Ladies' Night meeting of the Methodist Men by the District Superintendent. This was all arranged by the Chairman without my knowledge. When he spoke to me about it he had it all worked out. I told him that it would be better for the minister to install the officers in a moment of inspiration together at the chancel with the whole congregation participating on a Sunday soon after Conference. But it was done as the Chairman had planned, five weeks before the officers are to assume their various duties. Perhaps this relationship can be worked out gracefully, but the practice of by-passing the pastor is of very long standing. I let a lot of this get by since there was already enough trouble in other areas.

Still another concern is here: you will be promised freedom of the pulpit, just as I was, but you cannot count on it. If times were quiet and normal here, I think you could count on it. But in these time of emotional furor among us, you cannot. Dr. Selah had it until the crisis came, and then no more. I had it not at all. One of the main members of our pastoral relations Committee (Bob Ridgway) said to me the other day that preachers in Galloway "have to hold their tongues." I then mentioned several important preachers who had spoken in Galloway in recent years and asked whether they had held their tongues, and he said, "Yes." Of course, a great deal depends on the kind of message you wish to bring. Something very personal and intimate and devotional will do, but the prophetic note definitely is out. And when you feel you just must strike a prophetic note now and then for the sake of some who hunger for it they will be happy to hear it, but you will gravely offend others, and those others wield the main influence in the church now.

My predecessor and I both watched the Board pass anti-Methodist resolutions over our objections. And last year when the Board voted overwhelmingly to strike World Service out of our church budget- and it remained out for eight months- and I asked that it not be stricken, some of our officials thought that it wasn't any of the preacher's business what they did about this, and plainly told me so. A good course of instruction in the Discipline, if this could be successfully offered to the Board, might help at that point. The objection to World Service was on the grounds that some of it was used by the National Council of Churches. Last Easter some of our people would not contribute to the Easter offering for our missionaries unless the offering went directly to the missionaries. They didn't want any of our money "going through New York." We might complete the offering by some other method of giving. All these people mean well, of course.

Some of these points you might want cleared up before you come. It can be done much easier now than later. When I came I simply trusted the people to accept me as pastor. After the interview I had relative to my coming, it seemed that I could. But it was too much to expect at the time.

But there are some grand people here. They have been a blessing to me. And they will be to the next man.

May your ministry grow increasingly satisfying. I hope our paths will cross often. I am very eager for you to make the best possible start if you come here, and you will if some of these things are mutually agreed upon for your benefit as pastor, in advance.

You know you have our continuing love.

Sincerely,

